Outstanding amount of peace keeping operations

†1054. SHRI JAI PRAKASH AGGARWAL: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the outstanding amount regarding the deployment of Indian Army and other heads for its role in peace keeping campaigns of United Nations Organisation at present;

(b) if so, the reasons for delay in payment; and

(c) the steps taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Till January, 2009, approximately US $ 22 million was outstanding from the UN in connection with India's troop and police contributions in current and past UN peacekeeping operations.

(b) This is caused by a shortage of funds with the UN due to non-timely payment of contributions by member states.

(c) Government has asked the UN to settle the pending amount.

Agreement with Afghanistan

1055. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has decided to join hands with Afghanistan to deal with their common problem of fighting terrorism originated from Pakistan soil;

(b) if so, the details of the strategy evolved in this regard and by when it would be implemented;

(c) whether he had recently visited Kabul and arrived at any agreement with the Government of Afghanistan; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) In a joint Press Conference issued during the visit of Afghan President Karzai to India on 4th August, 2008 the Prime Minister and the President of Afghanistan agreed that both countries would not allow terrorism to stand in their way and would fight it unitedly with full determination. During President Karzai's visit to India on 12.1.2009 after the Mumbai terrorist attack, PM and President Karzai called for the full compliance with bilateral, multilateral and international obligations of States to prevent terrorism in any manner originating from territories under their control since terrorism emanates from the sanctuaries and training camps and the sustenance and support received by the terrorist groups.

(c) and (d) The External Affairs Minister visited Afghanistan on February 21-22, 2009 for inauguration, jointly with the President of Afghanistan of the Zaranj-Delaram road project in

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

south-western Afghanistan. During the visit, both sides reaffirmed their strong commitment to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Intelligence report about Masood Azhar

1056. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Masood Azhar was moved out of his home town Bahavalpur in mid December to a safer place in North West Frontier province, as per intelligence report;

(b) whether it is also a fact that Pakistan Government had categorically denied the presence of Jaish-e-Mohammed Leader Masood Azhar in their country when asked by Government for his deportation;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether this information was shared with U.S. agencies; and

(e) if so, what was their reaction in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Government has no definitive information about the precise location of Masood Azhar in Pakistan at this moment.

(b) and (c) The Foreign Ministry of Pakistan in a press release on 18th December, 2008 stated that ".....Masood Azhar is wanted by the Law Enforcement authorities of Pakistan and is at large".

(d) and (e) The information was contained in a Press Release by the Government of Pakistan.

Export duty on Basmati rice

1057. SHRIMATI T. RATNA BAI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether export duty has been abolished on Basmati rice; and

(b) if so, the benefits being accrued by each State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) Yes, Sir. The export duty on Basmati rice has been fully exempted with effect from 02.02.2009 *vide* Notification No. 10/2009-Customs, dated the 2nd February, 2009.

(b) The State-wise figures in respect of exports of Basmati rice and the benefits accruing to each of the State on account of export duty exemption given to basmati rice are not maintained. As per the definition notified by the Department of Agriculture, Basmati rice is grown in the States of Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Western Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The export duty exemption provided to Basmati rice is likely to benefit these States.